

***Delay in implementing benefits for Guard/Reserve personnel who have served multiple deployments or extended tours "unacceptable"***

**Washington, D.C.** – Today, Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) again called upon U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates to implement leave benefits for 16,000 National Guard personnel across the country, including nearly 2,400 Minnesotans. In an initial January 2008 letter to Gates, McCollum explained that members of the Minnesota National Guard who had their deployment to Iraq extended in 2007 were unable to apply for certain benefits intended to ease the hardship of frequent and extended tours.

In a follow-up letter delivered today, McCollum reiterated to Secretary Gates that members of the Minnesota National Guard's 1st Brigade Combat Team served the longest deployment in the history of the Guard, have been waiting for these benefits for months, and deserve prompt action from the Department of Defense.

"All Guard and Reserve units that had their combat tours extended deserve the same reward for their sacrifice as their Active Duty comrades," said McCollum. "It's a matter of basic fairness. These benefits were intended for these men and women, and the delay in resolving this situation is unacceptable."

The benefits in question are provided through the Post-Deployment/Mobilization Respite Absence (PDMRA) program, which offers Armed Forces personnel additional days of leave when their deployments are unexpectedly extended. Many activated Reserve and

National Guard units, which make up as much as 40 percent of troops serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, have received additional or extended tours of duty that may qualify them for PDMRA benefits.

Unfortunately, though the PDMRA program was authorized in January 2007, the program's implementation was not complete when Minnesota National Guard troops returned from Iraq and were taken off Active Duty in July 2007. Because they were caught in this "implementation gap," these soldiers have yet to access these benefits.

In December 2007, Army and DOD officials proposed to the Secretary of Defense that all troops deactivated before the program was finally implemented be compensated for the additional leave they should have received. In January 2008, Rep. McCollum wrote to Secretary Gates asking that he accept this proposal and compensate the soldiers as quickly as possible. More than four months later, the Secretary has yet to respond other than to state that the situation is currently under consideration.

**Click [below](#) to download a PDF of Congresswoman McCollum's correspondence with Defense Secretary Gates and Army Secretary Geren on this issue.**